

## Elizabeth House feasting its 40th

When a group of Protestant churches in N.D.G. sponsored the creation of Elizabeth House, in 1968, it was as a haven for unwed pregnant girls from well-to-do families. Today's clients come with a plethora of problems beyond their pregnancy – dysfunctional families, violent relationships, drug abuse. Elizabeth House, now officially classified as a rehabilitation centre for young parents in difficulty, provides professional services and programs to help them adjust to parenthood, and improve their lives. It is the only English agency of its kind in Quebec.

“Our main focus is that they be able to parent,” says **Linda Schachtler**, executive director. “But as well as parenting, they are coached in behavioural and lifestyle skills. We work on an integrated service model with a staff of trained childcare workers, involving other professionals as needed.”

Elizabeth House has in-house accommodation for a total of 18 mothers and babies. There is schooling for teenaged clients, and a nursery program. After birth, there is supervised apartment living for some, a transitional apartment program for others. “And now there are 29 subsidized apartments available to young parents in the Benny Farm project in N.D.G”, says Schachtler. “That is a separate and autonomous program, but it was our advocacy initiative.” Elizabeth House also provides external services to young parents – which now include fathers. For further information: 514 482 2488, ext. 222.

## More federal funding on the way

Health Canada has announced more funding to support professional training and retention in Quebec's anglophone communities. This follows the outstanding results realized by McGill's Training and Human Resources Development project over the past four years. Over 2,000 francophone health and social services workers took English language training to better serve their anglophone clients. In addition, 142 student interns from different disciplines were placed throughout the province.

## Portage proud at 35

Portage, Canada's largest drug rehabilitation complex, will be celebrating its 35th anniversary by releasing the results of a major, independent study proving the effectiveness of its treatment programs. “The results are really revolutionary,” claims Peter Howlett, Portage president.

Increasingly concerned about the lack of official response to soaring drug addiction in the late '60s, a group of prominent Montrealers decided to take action. The result was Portage, now known around the world for its “cutting edge” therapeutic community approach to rehabilitating drug addicts.

Portage's first facility was an adult residential treatment centre, in the Laurentians, in 1973. There are now eight drug addiction centres in Quebec; one each in Ontario and New Brunswick; and a new one opening in B. C. this year. So far, over 35,000 adults and adolescents have received treatment at Portage.

“We've proven beyond a doubt that robust treatment is necessary for serious drug abusers,” says Howlett. “Public authorities tend towards the least intrusive, and less costly, approach, such as daycare, injection sights, and needle distribution. These are poor substitutes for our clients, who are poly-drug abusers, profoundly dependent for years.

“This new research illustrates how effective our approach is,” says Howlett. “The dramatic, enduring drop in drug use, improvement in functionality, major decline in criminality: Portage's results are remarkable. They not only bring social and financial benefits to the community, but also hope and dignity to our clients, who are getting back their lives.”

## Centraide campaign kickoff coming

Centraide of Greater Montreal will launch its 2008-09 fund-raising campaign at noon on Wednesday, October 8. The traditional “March of 1000 Umbrellas” will mark the event, which starts at McGill College Avenue and St. Catherine Street.

## Community pillars parting

*Three of the Montreal anglophone community's most stalwart and long serving leaders are stepping down. Zenny Bryniawsky, executive director of CCS (Catholic Community Services), Kevin Cohalan, executive director of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, and Michael Udy, executive director of Batshaw Youth and Family Services, are all leaving their posts this fall. Their combined 55 years of directing the community's major social service agencies have contributed considerably to the well being of English-speaking Montrealers. They will be missed.*

**Zenny Bryniawsky** was named CCS executive director in 1987, after having served for several years as planning director for United Red Feather Services. "My job was to reboot a 55-year-old organization into one that was financially sound, innovative and responsive to the changes taking place in Quebec.

"At that time, the CCS mission was to work 'on behalf of English-speaking Catholics', and those early community roots are still strong. But over the years, we concentrated on what we were doing rather than where we came from and, today, CCS serves individuals and families from many different cultures and religions. We started or helped develop many smaller agencies and supported them to spin off on their own. And we started looking outside the box, getting involved in networking tables and partnerships with other organizations. Our most recent venture was the spearheading of a network of organizations serving anglophones in the East End.

"It's been a fascinating time for me, working with an extraordinary staff and wonderful volunteers. It was such a privilege to serve the community. That's why I stayed on for 21 years."

**Kevin Cohalan** has been executive director of the Volunteer Bureau for 22 years. "Times had changed dramatically since the Bureau was founded in 1937, so structural streamlining and updating of its role in contemporary Montreal were early preoccupations. From the beginning, my feeling was that we had to sell volunteering to the general public

much like any other product. It's taken a while, but we've made some progress in the past few years.

"Most of our recruiting is, as always, for health and social services organizations, but we've broadened our mandate into sports, cultural and environmental areas. We encourage Montrealers to play an active role in society on behalf of whatever cause interests them. We now meet with up to 1500 potential volunteers a year, and recruit volunteers for over 700 organizations.

"I think the Bureau is recognized as the number one organization identified with volunteerism in Montreal. Although a historically English agency, we've adapted successfully to the city's French and ethnic realities: 23 percent of the volunteers we recruit are anglophone, 38 percent francophone and 39 percent come from other cultural communities."

**Michael Udy**, executive director of Batshaw Youth and Family Services for the past 12 years, joined its founding agency, Shawbridge, in 1968 as childcare worker and teacher. "Over the past 40 years, two of the biggest changes I've witnessed globally are recognition that children have rights and the continuing professionalization of care that they receive. Within Batshaw, we've consolidated many small players into one cohesive organization offering programs that better serve kids and their families.

"One of our achievements I'm most proud of is having survived the draconian budget cuts of the nineties. With ten percent less funding and ten percent fewer staff, we not only survived, but thrived. Today, we're involved with some 2300 youth and their families daily and, in total, with over 5400 a year. This is all due to the dedicated efforts of over 1000 people.

"I'm proud that Batshaw is considered one of the leaders in its field, both provincially and nationally. That is due in no small way to Manny Batshaw, our namesake, on whose precepts of child care our organization is based. I'll be taking those principles with me into my new role in the provincial training program for youth centre professionals."

## Help a call away for caregivers

Persons caring for mentally ill family members often carry that burden in isolation. However, the national Mental Health Commission has just approved funding for a new project that will be coming to their aid. It is a peer-based support program proposed by the Commission's Family Caregivers Committee.

"It's a very practical, hands-on concept," explains **Ella Amir**, Committee chair, and executive director of AMI-Quebec. "By calling a 1-800 number, a caregiver anywhere in the country will be able to make contact with someone – of their own language or culture – who is coping with a similar diagnosis. The Commission will also be setting up a national database of locally available services and resources to which callers can be referred. The call service itself will start as a pilot in one or two provinces.

"Families of mentally ill persons are hit with a double whammy," Amir adds. "They're not getting the help they need in order to support their relatives, and their own physical and mental health is compromised. We have to keep reminding the public authorities and service providers of that." For further information: 514 486 1448.

## Chinese elders asked to chat

Senior members of Montreal's Chinese community are being asked to recount their life experiences to a team of young volunteer interviewers. Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal is compiling 100 of their stories.

"The first goal of this oral history project is to involve seniors in the community," says **Chia-ling Chung**, coordinator of Volunteer Services. "Many are restricted to their own family circles, while those in residences are even more isolated. We think their stories are valuable to the next generation. An added bonus is that the project is promoting volunteerism among our young people." Interviewers were trained at Concordia's Oral History Research Laboratory.

## Diabetes project gets national nod

The province-wide diabetes awareness program spearheaded by Montreal's East Island Network for English-language Services is moving onto the national stage. The Public Health Agency of Canada has provided additional funding so that the network can compile a full-fledged report on the program for use by other communities across the country.

"They want us to zero in on what worked, and why," says **Janet Forsyth**, community organizer and project manager. "In my opinion, what is most outstanding is how well the seven participating regional networks were able to get the message out to their populations."

Each community set up its own local partnerships and its own strategy to target teens and the elderly, but some common issues emerged. It became obvious, for instance, that the usual practice of educating adolescents about diabetes was not working. "They are clearly averse to being told to eat properly and exercise," says Forsyth. "That's too much like parental nagging. They want specific information: Am I at risk, what will it do to me, and so on. We also found that kids in grades 5 and 6 were the most receptive to healthcare information.

"A key outcome of this project," says Forsyth, "was that we were able to compare services among the communities and found a hierarchy of needs that allowed us to develop a more targeted approach. That's half the battle." For further information: 514 955 8370, ext. 2217.

## Calculating disability savings

The new federal Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) is scheduled to start on December 1. This benefit enables parents to provide financially for disabled children after their death. Families interested in setting up an RDSP can now access an online calculator to help them project the estimated future value of their plan. It is available at [www.plan.ca](http://www.plan.ca).

## More low-cost housing dollars

The provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs has announced funding to build 1000 more social housing units in Montreal. This venture is part of a \$132 million investment, announced in the last budget, to provide 2000 more such dwellings for the city's needy.

Affordable housing is in high demand in Montreal. There is presently only a 1.4-percent vacancy rate for units with at least three bedrooms that rent for less than \$700. One household in five spends more than 50 percent of family income on housing; in some districts, that figure is one in four.

## Searching for senior-friendly cities

An international movement towards making cities more accommodating to the day-to-day needs of seniors is gaining credence in Quebec. Researchers at the University of Sherbrooke Centre for Research on Aging have already begun an assessment of that city's attention to its older citizens. Security, healthcare services, opportunities for social involvement – even resting benches and sidewalk size – are being considered as part of a total senior friendly environment. Minister of Family and Seniors **Marguerite Blais** has provided \$2.8 million for five other municipalities and a municipal regional council to develop projects that address the issue. Their results will be submitted in 2013. (When approached on the question by a national association of retirees, Montreal attributed its inaction to too many layers of municipal bureaucracy.)

## Commission's first report soon due

The province's Health and Welfare Commission will be tabling the report of its first public consultation later this fall. Set up two years ago to monitor and advise the Minister on the province's healthcare system, the Commission was asked to provide guidance on a proposed prenatal tracking program to detect Down's Syndrome. Its report will be available at [www.csbe.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.csbe.gouv.qc.ca).

## In brief

**Margaret Douek** has been appointed new executive director of Batshaw Youth and Family Services.

**Clifford Lincoln** was renamed board chair of the English-speaking Catholic Council.

Rev. **Patricia Kirkpatrick** is chair of the board of Auberge Madeleine.

Depression Screening Week runs from October 5 to 11. Screening will take place at 16 sites in Greater Montreal. For information: 514 486 1448.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal is offering a series of training workshops covering: Volunteer recruitment, October 29; Volunteer selection and screening, November 27; Volunteer integration and supervision, January 29; and Addressing behaviour issues with volunteers, February 26. For further information: 514 842 3351.

The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) is holding workshops on the following topics: Board liability and non-profit organizations, October 24; Employer and employee rights and responsibilities, November 21. For information: 514 849 5599.

AMI-Quebec is hosting 7-8 p.m. tele-workshops on: The challenges of depression in older adults, October 22; Why are you so angry? A management guide, November 19; Psychiatric medications and other treatments: what's behind all the controversy, January 28; Truths and myths about bipolar disorders, February 25; Personality disorders: more common than you think, March 25. Register by calling 1 866 396 2433.

The Quebec Centre for Philanthropy is offering its latest directories on funding sources and foundations on CD-ROM. Call 514 341 2547.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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